

## MDT Centennial Celebration—Good Roads Day June 18



*Car stuck in the mud in the 1930s on what is now US 10 in Mineral County.*

**G**ood Roads Day, June 18, will mark the official kick-off of the Centennial celebration of the Montana Department of Transportation. This anniversary provides an opportunity to celebrate 100 years of transportation accomplishments in Montana, reflect on the evolution of the department, and look toward the next 100 years.

Some may argue that the transportation system started long before July 1805, when William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition observed Indian "roads" north of Helena. Others may start the clock in 1860 when Lt. John Mullan built the first engineered road in Montana, a 624 mile road between Walla Walla, Washington and Fort Benton. Officially, 1913 marks the beginning of what is now known as the Montana Department of Transportation. It was this year that the Montana Legislature created the Montana State Highway Commission. The chief engineer, George R. Metlen, was one of three commissioners and the only salaried member of the commission. The annual budget of the department was \$5,000. In 1919, the Montana Highway Department was formed.

Over the years the department has served many roles, from printing the first state map in 1914, to being responsible for visitor information and tourism promotion. The department established roadside museums and at one time was even responsible for the State Parks commission functions.

By the 1950's, the department significantly expanded its operations when President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 into law, establishing the Interstate highway system, the Federal Highway Trust Fund, and providing significantly more money to the states to complete the system.

In 1971, Governor Forest Anderson signed the Executive Reorganizing Act that established nineteen state agencies, including the Montana Department of Highways. Then in 1991, following federal legislation called ISTEA, the Montana Department of Highways was reorganized as the Montana Department of Transportation. This brought with it Aeronautics, Transit, and Rail programs from the Department of Commerce. The Highway Traffic Safety Office, responsible for transportation safety behavior programs, was taken on from the Department of Justice.

Today, MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment. The department's primary responsibilities include:

- ♦ road/bridge design and construction;
- ♦ contract administration;
- ♦ materials design and testing;
- ♦ property acquisition;
- ♦ scale programming and cost accounting;
- ♦ motor fuel collection and enforcement;
- ♦ vehicle weight and dimension law enforcement;
- ♦ implementing the Outdoor Advertising Control Act;
- ♦ managing the state motor pool;
- ♦ highway, bridge and rest area maintenance;
- ♦ public transportation, rail programs and planning;
- ♦ general aviation airport planning; and
- ♦ highway traffic safety.

MDT is currently responsible for 11,758 centerline miles of road (on-system) and Montana has another 63,123 off-system centerline miles of road. The annual vehicle miles traveled in 2011 was 8.6 billion, on system and another 3.1 billion annual vehicle miles traveled off-system. MDT Maintenance forces plow snow on about 3.4 million miles per year—that is seven trips to the moon and back. The staff has grown from two (the chief engineer and a stenographer) to approximately 2,000 full-time, temporary, and seasonal employees, each working to provide a comprehensive transportation network that

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### Upcoming Centennial Events

**June 17-27**—Transportation History Display  
Capitol Rotunda

**June 18**—Good Roads Day 3-7 p.m.— Helena Capitol  
- MDT history display in the rotunda  
- vintage, classic and muscle car show  
- MDT vehicles & equipment  
- refreshments

### Throughout the Year:

- Read more about MDT history on-line @ [mdt.mt.gov](http://mdt.mt.gov) and share your stories on the Montana Department of Transportation Facebook page
- Watch for announcements on presentations from MDT Historian Jon Axline

## Tooley Appointed to the National Freight Advisory Committee



*MDT Director Mike Tooley*

**M**DT Director Mike Tooley was one of two state transportation department directors appointed to the National Freight Advisory Committee.

The committee provides recommendations and advice to improve the national freight transportation system. Members serve two-year terms and meet at least three times a year.

The 47 committee members represent diverse interests and perspectives on freight transportation. The advisory committee makes recommendations to USDOT on freight movement and policy.

## Hand Named Great Falls District Administrator



*Dave Hand, Great Falls District Administrator*

**D**ave Hand has been named MDT Great Falls District Administrator. He has more than 30 years with MDT, starting in 1983 with the Core Drill Section.

In 1989, he left Core Drill for a truck driver position on MacDonald Pass, only to return to Core Drill as section supervisor in 1992. He took the Bozeman Maintenance Superintendent position in 1995 and then became the Maintenance Chief in Havre for six years and Great Falls for three years.

In 2011, Dave began a two-year run as Maintenance Operations Manager in Helena prior to returning to Great Falls as District Administrator.

Dave and his wife Becky have four children and four grandchildren with a fifth on the way. They enjoy touring on their motorcycle, camping, and anything that involves time with their grandchildren.

## Governor Appoints Members to Transportation Commission and Aeronautics Board

**G**overnor Steve Bullock appointed one new member and reappointed two members to the Montana Transportation Commission. He also appointed one new member and reappointed four members to the Montana Aeronautics Board.

Newly appointed to the Transportation Commission is John Cobb. He is a former legislator from Augusta. Reappointed are Rick Griffith of Butte and Barb Skelton of Billings. Their terms will expire in 2017. Other members are Kevin Howlett (chair) of Arlee and Carol Lambert of Broadus. Their terms expire in 2015.

Walter McNutt of Sidney is newly appointed to the Montana Aeronautics Board. He is a state representative. Reappointed members are Tricia McKenna (chair) of Bozeman, Bill Hunt, Jr. of Shelby, Roger Lincoln of Gilford, and Fred Leistiko of Kalispell. Their terms expire in 2017. Other members are Fred Lark of Lewistown, Robert Buckles of Bozeman, Chuck Manning of Lakeside, and A. Christopher Edwards of Billings. Their terms expire in 2015.

The State's Transportation Commission and Aeronautics Board are independent, quasi-judicial bodies established by state law. The appointments are for four-year terms and subject to approval by the Montana Senate.

Members of the Transportation Commission represent the five transportation districts in the state. At least one of the members must have specific knowledge of Indian culture and tribal transportation needs. The Director of MDT acts as a liaison between the Commission and the Department of Transportation.

The Aeronautics Board consists of nine members, at least one of whom must be an attorney. Members of the Board represent facets of the aviation community.

## Newman Hired as Law Enforcement Liaison for State Highway Traffic Safety Section



*Chad Newman, Law Enforcement Liaison for State Highway Traffic Safety Section*

**C**had Newman has been selected to serve as the new Law Enforcement Liaison for the State Highway Traffic Safety Section. Chad comes to MDT after five years as the Emergency Action Plan Coordinator in Dam Safety with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation.

Prior to his employment with state government, Chad worked in natural resources and planning for municipal, tribal, and federal agencies in Montana, Idaho, and Utah. He currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Lewis and Clark County Conservation District.

Chad graduated from Utah State University in 1995. In 2007 he graduated Magna Cum Laude with a MA in Geography – Community and Environmental Planning – from the University of Montana.

Chad and his wife have three children and a small farm plus enjoy a wide array of outdoor recreational activities.



## New Manager Named for Yellowstone Airport

Jeff Kadlec has been named Manager for the Yellowstone Airport. The airport, which is owned by the state of Montana and operated by the Aeronautics Division, sees commercial airline service from June 1 through September 30. Jeff will oversee day-to-day operations and FAA compliance, as well as airport planning and development.



Jeff Kadlec, Yellowstone Airport Manager

Previously, Jeff was with Airside Operations at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. He received his Bachelor of Science degree in Aeronautical Management from Arizona State University and is also a certified flight instructor. He holds numerous other pilot certificates, ratings, and endorsements. Jeff has a strong passion for aviation and is excited to join the MDT team. If you're in the area, stop by the airport and welcome Jeff to MDT!

## Updated Highway Map is Available

The updated 2013-2014 Montana Highway map is available for distribution. To get a free copy, call (406) 444-3423 or order online at: [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment\\_form.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml).

This year's map continues to show updated paved and multi-lane roads, new rest areas, recently dedicated memorial highways, new urban areas, and points of interest. Other helpful additions to this year's map includes time zones, changes in the symbology of population, and enhancements to the MDT mobile page to include condition and construction reports, as well as more specific Port of Entry information.

Populations have been changed to reflect current estimates, and gas station and hospital locations have been updated. The map highlights city inset maps, Montana's state symbols, traffic regulations, weather report, road conditions, emergency phone numbers, and a welcome message from Governor Bullock.



## Conrad Rest Area Hailed as 'State of the Art'

Less than a year after opening, observations left in the new Conrad rest stop comment box are consistently positive. The traveling public, local government officials, and nearby residents consider MDT's new rest area in Conrad among the best of its kind. The energy efficient building has a heat recovery ventilator, which results in a significant reduction in energy use, in-floor heat, a surveillance security system, and is a Wi-Fi hotspot. There are plans underway to install two 22-inch interactive touch-screen kiosks that will provide travelers with road and weather information, tourism hot spots, and other useful content. The interactive kiosks are expected to be available for the public's use early this summer.

Users from across the United States and Canada indicate that it is "the best rest stop in 9,000 miles." A traveler from Calgary, Alberta states "What a nice, functional design. . . . Thank you for this beautiful facility – inside and out!" Another traveler writes, "Beautiful rest stop! Way to go, Montana."

The rest area may also prove to be a boon to development and safety for the Conrad area. Mayor Wendy Judisch says that she is grateful that MDT chose their area for the facility. She says:

*"This great community asset not only enabled the City to extend our water and sewer services across the Interstate to our new Industrial Park; it also helped aid in the construction of a road that allows emergency services to access the east side of town when there are trains blocking the in-town crossings. This project was a fantastic example of what can be accomplished with cooperation and partnerships . . . the City of Conrad is proud to have been a part of the project and pleased with the amenities a rest area offers to the travelers in our region."*

Swank Enterprises, Morrison Maierle Inc., and Collaborative Design Architects helped make the Conrad Rest Area a success. MDT Project Manager Mike Klette and Civil Engineer III Jay Manuel coordinated the construction of this innovative rest area, which was completed ahead of schedule in November 2012.

MDT manages its rest areas through an asset-management based approach with funding dedicated to a mix of reconstruction and minor rehabilitation type work. Rest areas currently under design include Bear Mouth, Divide, Flowing Wells, and Reynolds with Grey Cliff and Teton River being constructed this summer.



Conrad Rest Area

# Tribal Transportation Safety Summit and Annual Transportation Safety Meetings Set

The 2013 Tribal Transportation Safety Summit and the Annual Transportation Safety Meeting are scheduled to run concurrently October 15-18, 2013, at the Gateway Center, located at 1710 National Avenue in Helena.

These combined events bring together safety partners and stakeholders to assess Montana's progress on improving transportation safety and to discuss strategies to reduce crashes. Areas of emphasis include:

- ◆ Seatbelt Use
- ◆ Alcohol & Impaired Driving Crashes
- ◆ Native American Crashes
- ◆ Traffic Records Management
- ◆ Young Driver Crashes
- ◆ Single Vehicle Run-off-the-Road Crashes
- ◆ High-Crash Corridor/High Crash Locations
- ◆ Large Vehicle and Bus Crashes
- ◆ Emergency Medical Services
- ◆ Motorcycle Crashes
- ◆ Older Driver Crashes

These emphasis areas are listed within *Montana's Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan*, a data-driven, collaborative effort of state agencies, local and tribal governments, and others to work toward reducing crashes on Montana's roadways. The *Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan* is located at [www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/chsp.shtml](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/chsp.shtml).

For more information, contact Pam Langve-Davis at 444-7646 or [plangvedavis@mt.gov](mailto:plangvedavis@mt.gov).

# Community Transportation Safety Planning Assistance Deadline Draws Near

MDT's award-winning approach used to develop the Montana Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan (found at: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/chsp.shtml>) is the model to support similar safety planning efforts in Montana communities.

MDT is seeking letters of interest from communities interested in receiving technical and financial assistance to develop a Community Transportation Safety Plan. These data-driven plans will identify specific focus areas and include an action plan with strategies, stakeholders/partners, resources, and activities.

Letters of interest should include a detailed description of the perceived problems, how the community would benefit from a safety plan, and letters of support from the safety partners in the community representing the 4Es of safety (education, enforcement, emergency services, and engineering). The deadline for letters of interest is July 1.

MDT will consider the following factors in determining successful candidates for assistance:

- ◆ Community support from local government and involvement from community safety partners and stakeholders (elected officials, law enforcement, emergency service providers, school districts, major employers, the public, safety organizations, tribal officials, judicial system, planners, transportation agencies, etc.).
- ◆ Focus on all four "Es" of transportation safety.
- ◆ Demonstration of consistency and coordination with other local plans, such as transportation plans.
- ◆ Commitment to implementing an action plan and monitor and report progress in achieving safety goals.

Additional information and examples can be found at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/safety/plans-programs/community-plans.shtml>.

Contact Pam Langve-Davis at 444-7646 or [plangvedavis@mt.gov](mailto:plangvedavis@mt.gov) for more information to address transportation safety issues in Montana communities.

## Transportation Alternatives

MAP-21 establishes a new program to provide for a variety of alternative transportation projects, including many that were previously eligible activities under separately funded programs. The Transportation Alternative (TA) replaces the funding from pre-MAP-21 programs including Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails\*\*, Safe Routes to School, and several other discretionary programs, wrapping them into a single funding source.

**Watch for more information posted on-line in early July!**

\*\* Montana's Recreational Trails Program is administered by the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Department. RTP applicants can also apply for both TA and RTP funding.



## Work Zone Safety Reminders

Staying alert and observing posted signage are vital for safe travel through highway work zones. The majority of crashes in work zones happen on straight roads during daylight hours and in clear weather conditions. For these reasons, MDT urges everyone to pay extra attention when driving through a work zone. Even when a work zone looks inactive, it is vital that motorists follow posted signs. Work may not be underway, but conditions may present hazards that are not readily apparent and require slower speeds and extra caution.

This summer, remember to plan ahead and add extra time to your travel itinerary. Dialing 511 or visiting <http://mdt511.com> before you depart may save the stress of encountering unexpected detours and delays, and may help determine an alternate route to avoid construction.

Find out about projects coming to your area by checking [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/tcp\\_montana\\_map.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/travinfo/docs/tcp_montana_map.pdf).

MDT suggests following these safety tips when driving through work zones:

- ◆ Remain calm and patient — work zones are designed for safety, and the purpose of the project is to improve the road for future travel.
- ◆ Pay attention to signs and obey road crew flaggers.
- ◆ Be alert, expect the unexpected, and avoid distractions.
- ◆ Follow posted speeds, even when crews are not present.
- ◆ Give large trucks extra room.
- ◆ Don't tailgate.
- ◆ Keep headlights on, even when you are stopped.
- ◆ Remember, fines double in Montana work zones.

## Motorcycle Training Courses Available

To ride a motorcycle legally in Montana, one must have a valid driver's license and motorcycle endorsement or permit. Attending one of the basic training courses below is an acceptable substitute for the skills test portion. Class costs range from \$80 to \$175.

**Basic RiderCourse(BRC)** - For novice or beginning riders, Basic RiderCourse students spend approximately five classroom hours learning skills needed to ride safely and about ten hours on the riding range applying those new skills to practical motorcycle riding.

**Basic RiderCourse 2 (BRC2)** - This rider safety class is designed for experienced riders with recent street riding experience in a variety of traffic situations— one year or 3,000 street miles is highly recommended. Even if you have been riding for years, there is always something new to learn to help you ride more safely and continue enjoying motorcycling.

**Advanced RiderCourse (ARC)** - For the seasoned rider with several years and lots of miles under the belt, step up to the new Advanced RiderCourse. This course applies sport bike handling techniques to your ride and real world street riding situations.

For more information and to register, call 1-800-922-BIKE or go to: <http://motorcycle.msun.edu>.

## May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month



Governor Steve Bullock kicked off Motorcycle Safety Awareness month in May at the state capitol.

Spring in Montana means the beginning of

motorcycle season. Motorcycle crashes represent a relatively small proportion of Montana's total crashes, but often result in serious injuries or fatalities. As weather improves, expect to see more motorcyclists on the roads.

Safety tips for motorcyclists:

- ◆ Have the proper motorcycle endorsement.
- ◆ Regardless of experience, take a motorcycle education course.
- ◆ Wear the proper protective gear, even on rides around town.
- ◆ Use your signals and signs.
- ◆ Make sure the headlight is working.
- ◆ Never assume a driver sees you.
- ◆ Proceed cautiously at intersections.
- ◆ Be aware of weather conditions.
- ◆ Give operating your motorcycle your full attention, and ride sober.

Safety tips for motor vehicle drivers:

- ◆ Be aware that it is motorcycle season.
- ◆ Look twice for motorcycles before turning or changing lanes.
- ◆ Remember a motorcycle's smaller size can make it appear farther away than it is and make it difficult to judge its speed.
- ◆ Use your turn signals.
- ◆ Leave plenty of room between your vehicle and a motorcycle traveling in front of you, especially when roads are wet or visibility is limited.

## 2013 Legislative Review

The recently adjourned 63<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session saw many bills affecting MDT and transportation stakeholders regarding Driving Under the Influence (DUI), funding, and new urban populations. Below is a recap of those bills:

### DUI Bills

**House Bill (HB) 168** creates a prosecutable offense if more than 5 ng/ml of delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, a chemical component of cannabis, is found in the blood. Additionally, this law allows law enforcement officers to obtain a search warrant for a blood sample from a person with a valid marijuana registry card if suspected of driving under the influence of marijuana.

**HB 233** revises and clarifies the 24/7 Sobriety Program. The law expands the monitoring program, allows for ignition interlock or

*Continued on next page*



sobriety program as a condition for a probationary license, allows for other law enforcement agencies to implement 24/7 sobriety programs, and enables the program to be used for the first offense of aggravated DUI.

**HB 355** increases the five-year look-back for alcohol and drug driving offenses to ten years for a second offense DUI and eliminates the look-back limit altogether for a third offense. This law dramatically increases the state's ability to enforce penalties and rehabilitation for DUI offenders with multiple convictions.

**SB 314** requires the court to report all offenses that trigger suspension, restriction, or revocation of driver licenses to the Department of Motor Vehicles within five days. It also eliminates exceptions that have allowed delays. SB 314 brings Montana into compliance with federal reporting requirements.

**HB 559** generally revises motor vehicle laws. Of note, HB 559 makes violation of a speed limit in certain instances, such as a school zone, a misdemeanor. The goal of this law is to reduce and eliminate the number of speeding violations and decrease the number of injuries and fatalities of pedestrians and drivers.

### **Other**

**HB 194** revises gasoline and vehicle fuel tax fund laws. This bill provides more flexibility to local governments on construction, reconstruction, maintenance, or general repairs. This bill increases the amount that "triggers" low-bid considerations for local governments from \$25,000 to \$50,000. This will allow local governments to more rapidly address smaller projects and repairs.

**Senate Bill (SB) 111** clarifies the definition of an urban population, and aligns Montana's definition of an urban population exceeding 5,000 to the Federal Census definitions. Based on and from 2010 Census, this bill increases Montana's urban areas from 16 to 19 areas. These areas are eligible for funds to prioritize transportation projects on certain roads in their community.

**HB 513** exempts oversize load permits from the Montana Environmental Policy Act. This bill will allow for rapid permitting of oversize loads on Montana's highways, potentially increasing commerce throughout the state.

**HB 299** names portions of Highway 2 in Blaine County for officers who died in the line of duty.

The section of Highway 2 between Harlem and Chinook will be named after Patrick A Pyette, Undersheriff for the Blaine County Sheriff's Department, who died in the line of duty on December 14, 2011, while directing traffic.

The portion of Highway 2 from Zurich to the boundary of the Fort Belknap Reservation will be named after Joshua Rutherford, who while working as a Deputy of the Blaine County Sheriff's Department, died in the line of duty on May 29, 2003, while responding to a domestic disturbance.

## **Saving Dollars Through Montana Rest Area Usage Research**

MDT's research project "Montana Rest Area Usage: Data Acquisition and Usage Estimation" resulted in data collection and analysis to support various aspects of future rest area planning, design, and operations in the state of Montana. Usage data from rest areas throughout the state was used in the research to develop guidance related to various aspects of rest areas, including parking, patron visitation, water usage, and wastewater generation. A key piece of guidance recommends a water usage value of 2.0 gallons per patron, which correlated to the same value per patron for wastewater generation. This is a significant departure from the existing guidance provided by AASHTO's "Guide for Development of Rest Areas on Major Arterials and Freeways", which recommends the use of 3.5 gallons per patron. This 1.5 gallon difference is more appropriate for Montana and has significant implications on the sizing and associated cost of each system and advanced wastewater treatment component, the land area necessary for a drain field, and resulting operations and maintenance of the constructed system. The application of this finding in designs for new and renovated rest areas was the most immediate outcome from the short-term implementation of the research.

In just the next two years, there are six rest areas scheduled for wastewater system rehabilitation. The savings realized at these sites is over \$1.3 million. When applied in the design calculations of systems at an additional 30 Montana rest areas requiring wastewater system rehabilitation over the next 20 years (through 2032), the reduced wastewater figure is expected to produce savings of between \$87,000 and \$603,750 per site. The collective savings generated by this revised guidance will total over \$8,804,295 in present value. The present cost of the research (2013) is \$165,905. These savings and the research cost were used to calculate a benefit-cost ratio of 26:1 and a return on investment of 25.

### *MDT Centennial Celebration continued from page 1*

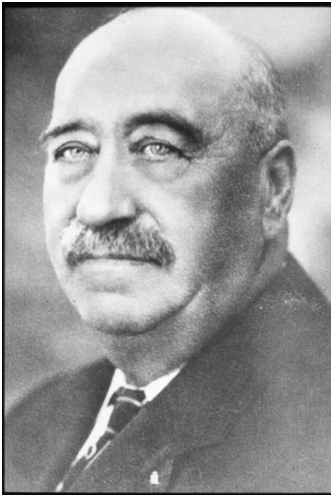
includes roadways, airways, airports, railways, traffic safety, and public transit systems, along with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. This inter-connected system "drives" Montana's quality of life and economy by moving workers to jobs, raw and finished products in-and out-of state, and travelers safely to their destinations. This is all accomplished by our staff working with federal, state, and local government partners, tribal partners, and with private citizens, businesses and groups.

Celebrate with MDT, starting June 18 at the Capitol for an afternoon of history and fun. Visit our website [mdt.mt.gov](http://mdt.mt.gov) for more detailed history and share your stories and memories about transportation in Montana on Facebook.

# The Highway Commission Reorganized (1917)

## A New Way of Doing Things

by Jon Axline, MDT Historian



*Prison Warden Frank Conley began working prisoners on road projects in 1910.*

The Montana State Highway Commission had made great strides since its creation in 1913, but ultimately it was only a paper agency. With its \$5,000 per year budget, it had no money to design or build roads and legislative restrictions did not make it mandatory for the counties to follow its recommendations. The commission did its best with the limited resources at its disposal. Because of that, it was subject to much public and political criticism. The problems, however, were not limited just to Montana – it was a national dilemma that Congress was forced to confront.

Bowing to pressure from the states, Congress passed the Federal-Aid Road Act in 1916. This momentous legislation had a profound impact on road-building in the states that would resonate for decades. Congress appropriated \$75 million to the states for road and bridge purposes over a five-year period. Montana's federal allocation was \$1.5 million. The highway commission allocated the funds to the counties on a fifty-fifty match basis. The commission became responsible for completing all surveys, developing plans and specifications, and estimates for road and bridge projects funded with Federal-Aid money. Importantly, it also began participating in the contract award process. The highway commission finally had the means to impose a standardized highway system on the state.

To manage the federal funds, the State Legislature reorganized the highway commission in March 1917. The new commission consisted of twelve men, appointed by the governor from each of the twelve construction districts. The commissioners selected three men to form an Executive Committee, composed of a president and two assistants. The president was the only salaried member of the commission, the others received per diem and expenses for their time. The full highway commission met twice a year, while the Executive Committee met on a monthly basis. Oscar Rohn of Butte was the first Executive Committee president. The committee made all policy decisions, provided advice and assistance to the counties, and oversaw all contracts for work on state highways. The other nine members provided support to the Executive Committee. Among the new highway commissioners was Frank Conley, the warden of the state penitentiary in Deer Lodge.

In order to fund the commission, the legislature raised the Motor Vehicle Tax in 1917. The state allocated 75 percent of the revenue derived from the tax to the highway commission, while the remaining 25 percent went directly to the counties to provide

matching funds for federal highway allocations. The highway commission used its portion of the tax to organize a highway department and hire Paul D. Pratt as the first State Highway Engineer. Pratt managed the department and answered directly to the highway commissioners. Under Pratt's leadership, the highway department expanded to meet its increased responsibilities under federal and state legislation.

It soon became obvious to the counties that the new highway commission was a proactive organization. Some counties, however, still distrusted the highway commission and "were openly unfriendly" to it. Perhaps realizing that much of the hostility may have been because of a lack of communication and direct contact with the counties, the commission established four district offices in August 1919 with each office under the control of a district engineer. Located at Helena, Billings, Great Falls, and Glasgow, the district offices established working relationships with local governments. The offices also provided bases for the resident engineers who monitored highway construction activities in the state.

World War I delayed the implementation of the 1916 Federal Aid Road Act in Montana. By 1919, however, the highway commission had its house in order and awarded to contract the first highway projects in its history. Over the course of the next three years, the commissioners awarded 72 projects in collaboration with the counties. It resulted in improvements to 358 miles of roads and the construction of several substantial bridges over the state's major rivers. The new system was clearly a success.

The major glitch, however, proved to be the commission's most powerful member, Frank Conley. His presence on the commission and as the president of the Executive Committee beginning in 1919 blurred the line between the prison, convict labor, and the highway commission. Conley was a strong leader, who concentrated the highway commission's activities at the state penitentiary. Livestock purchased by the commission for use by convict labor was pastured at his ranch with Conley charging the state for its use. Conley also decided on what projects prison labor would be used and there is some evidence that he financially benefitted from that program. Conley decided which county or contractor got to lease war surplus equipment for road construction. Importantly, he relocated the highway commission shop to the prison ranch near Deer Lodge from Helena in 1919 – a move that was not popular with all his colleagues on the board. Prison labor built a substantial brick building for the shop that year. By 1921, Frank Conley dominated the state's road construction program.

In 1921 Congress passed a new Federal Aid Road Act that profoundly changed the way highways were financed and constructed in the United States and Montana. With the Act's enactment, the State Legislature once again reorganized the highway commission. That legislation will be the subject of the next *Newsline* article.

MDT's mission is to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment.

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Montana Department of Transportation**

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*Newsline is a quarterly publication of the Rail, Transit and Planning Division, Montana Department of Transportation.*

**MDT Wants Your Comments**

To receive a list of highway projects MDT plans to present to the Transportation Commission, visit [http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans\\_comm/proposed\\_proj.pdf](http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve/docs/trans_comm/proposed_proj.pdf), or give us a call at 1-800-714-7296. You can mail your comments on proposed projects to MDT at the following address or e-mail them to [mdtnewprojects@mt.gov](mailto:mdtnewprojects@mt.gov).

MDT Project Analysis Manager  
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**Contact Information**

Only the most frequently requested numbers are listed here. For an area or person not listed, call 800-714-7296 (in Montana only) or 406-444-3423. The TTY number is 406-444-7696 or 800-335-7592.

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.....	
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.....	<a href="mailto:tomartin@mt.gov">tomartin@mt.gov</a>
Highway Traffic Safety (Vacant).....	444-7417
.....	
Map Orders .....	444-6119
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